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ABSTRACT

Based on the premise that schools' only contact with many citizens is through written communication, this booklet provides guidelines for educators on how to improve written messages from the school to parents and the general public. Recommendations are offered regarding the timing, length, and content of communications; writing style and word usage; layout and other visual considerations; the use of photographs; and the writing of difficult letters to parents. Also provided in the booklet are tips for preparing and distributing effective school newsletters, and brief notes on other internal and external publications, such as handbooks for students, parents, and substitute teachers. (GC)

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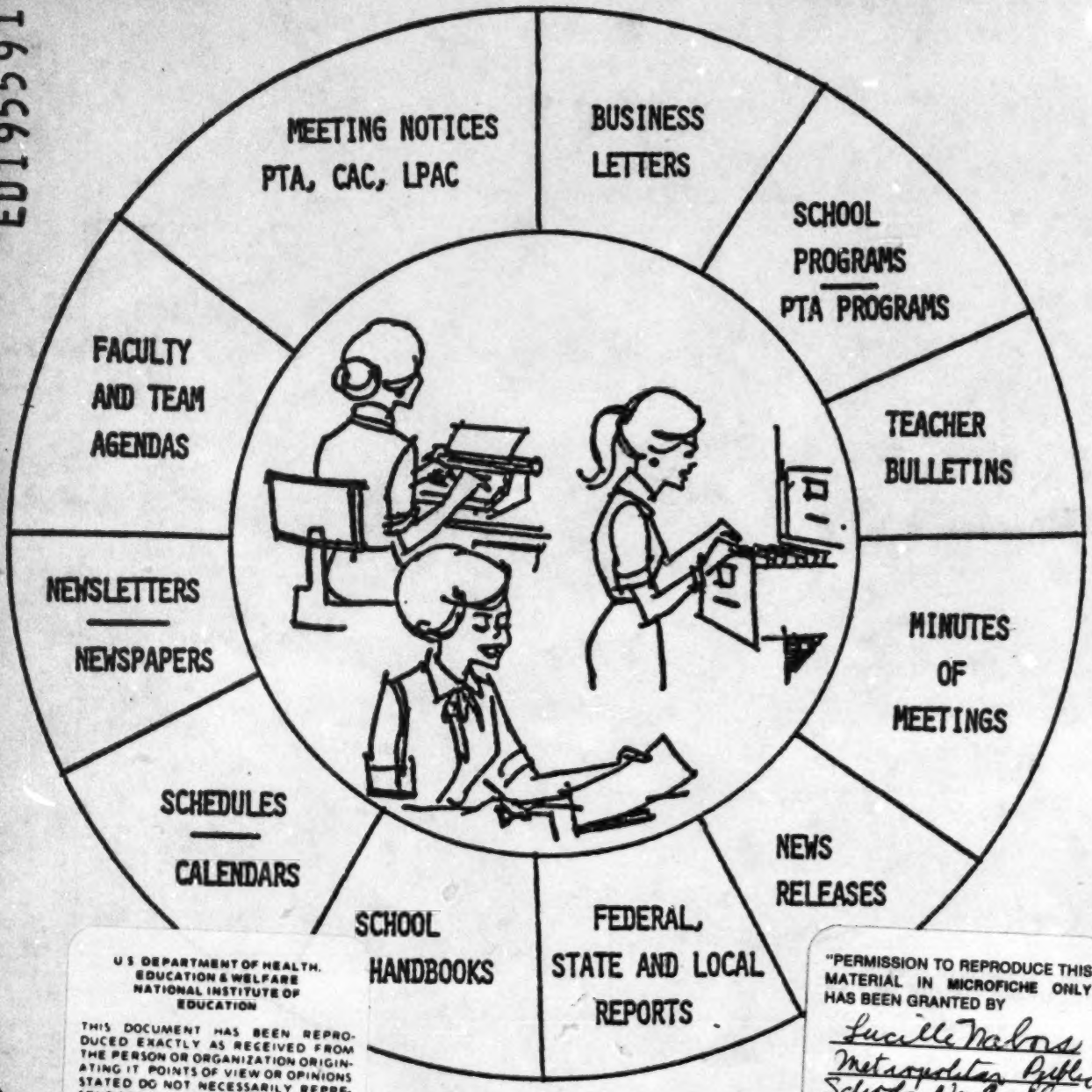
COMMUNICATIONS

School Home



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PRINCIPALS' IN-SERVICE — DISTRICT I

AUGUST 2, 1979

Building The School's Image Through Written Communication

The only contact with many school patrons, and particularly citizens without school age students, is often through the "written word". This may be through letters, memos, handbooks, posters, newspapers, and newsletters from the school, as well as through the regular newspapers and other public communications.

Therefore, it is very important, that all such "written contacts" be planned and screened carefully to insure that each one will help build a better understanding of the school and its program, and also project the best possible "public image".

COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST

STEP I ... IDENTIFY EXACTLY WHAT IT IS YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE

STEP II .. IDENTIFY THE DIFFERENT "PUBLICS" THAT WILL RECEIVE THE COMMUNICATION

STEP III . HAVE SEVERAL PERSONS READ AND REACT TO YOUR WRITTEN COPY TO SEE IF THEY UNDERSTAND "WHAT YOU MEANT TO SAY"

STEP IV .. DEVELOP A FORMAT SUITABLE FOR THE PARTICULAR INFORMATION YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE

STEP V ... IF TIME PERMITS, PUT THE COMMUNICATION ASIDE UNTIL THE NEXT DAY AND READ IT AGAIN BEFORE PRINTING

CONTENT OF COMMUNICATION

____ Content is accurate in terms of facts and information to be communicated in written form.

____ Content is of a readability level for the public/publics who will receive the communication.

____ Content has been checked for accuracy of spelling and grammatical usage.

FORMAT OF COMMUNICATION

____ The layout attracts the attention of the proposed reader and makes one want to read what is written.

____ There is balance in terms of word text and pictures, graphs or other methods of breaking up "long copy".

____ Important words, ideas or special points are emphasized for those who only "skim" or "quickly read" a communication.

LEGIBILITY OF COMMUNICATION

____ Original copy has been checked for legibility of typing before making copies (Clear typing ribbon, no typeovers or changes that will reproduce poorly.)

____ The first copy "off the press" has been checked again for any errors, problems with stencil, copy machine or paper.

____ Finished copies have been "skimmed" through to insure there are no "blanks" or "blurred" copies to go to the public.

RECEPTIVITY TO COMMUNICATION

_____ Appropriate steps have been taken to acquaint the various publics with what to expect in the way of school communications that will be coming home on a regular basis, those that are sent only a few times, and some that may be sent on "special occasions only."

_____ Communications going home have been sent on days appropriate to their content and purpose. Avoiding week-end deliveries when possible. (Time allowed for follow-up communications on major items or providing sufficient notice time before meeting, etc.)

_____ Communications have been sent home attached to regularly planned home communication such as the report card.

_____ Students have been made aware of content of communications and will become "school news carriers" by alerting parents and helping them understand the communications.

_____ The school has selected a special symbol, heading, logo or format that is "attention getting" and alerts the various publics that this is a school communication and therefore something that is important to read.

IF YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNICATION PASSES THE ABOVE CHECKLIST ITEMS LISTED ABOVE, YOU ARE WELL ON YOUR WAY TO HAVING MORE EFFECTIVE HOME/SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS THIS YEAR.

HOW TO WRITE SO YOU'LL BE UNDERSTOOD

The written word will always remain a vital form of communication between the schools and the public. Educators must write news releases, articles for publications, letters to parents, and numerous reports and statements for public consumption. Unfortunately, much of the writing is foggy, jargon-laden, wordy, dull and too complex for the average reader. It tends to be loaded with weak verbs, abstract terms, involved sentences, vague phrasing, and boring introductions.

Educators must learn to write so readers can grasp the message quickly. Most readers tire easily and won't work to dig out the message. The techniques suggested in this chapter will help transform a murky communication into a readable one.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

All communication must be related to the specific characteristics, needs and interests of the audience. It is essential to know their educational levels and occupations; their beliefs and attitudes; their group loyalties and norms, and whether they are friendly, hostile or indifferent. You should never send a message unless it's tailored to fit the audience. Asking yourself the following questions before writing will help.

- How much does my audience know?
- What might they want to know?
- What should they know?
- How can I present it to them in an interesting way?

Research shows the average person reads either to escape boredom or to be rewarded. So - to get maximum impact - your message must provide a benefit for the reader on his terms. And the benefit must be indicated to him immediately, or he'll lose interest.

Get to the point right away; long introductions bore readers. Research shows that readers will often stay with you for a 500 word message if you can interest them to read beyond the first 50 words. Conversely, most readers stop reading before 50 words - unless they identify the subject with their own interests.

AVOID JARGON

Every profession has its jargon or specialized language, and education is no exception. When used among educators, jargon sometimes speeds up communication. When aimed at the layman, it merely confounds and befuddles him.

Suppose a physician were to tell you "the retraction of dendrites produces a break in the synaptic connection." Or suppose a printer were to mention that "a ligature will prevent damage to the kerns." Confused? Then why expect laymen to be less confused with terms such as "distributive education," "paraprofessional," "articulation," "multimedia" and "resource person"? If you must use specialized terms, either put them in a context that indicates their meaning, or explain them as they are introduced. For example: "Resource centers-formerly known as libraries - now contain globes, films, records, and charts in addition to books and magazines." Also, avoid those jargon-laden cliches that smack of gobbledygook - writing that suffers from a swelling of its parts. Here are a few "classics" to avoid:

" A climate for learning that meets the needs of all students."

" A controlled environment that stimulates acceptable behavior patterns and academic learning."

" Producing viable learning experiences within the total pupil group."

USE FAMILIAR WORDS

Always use words you're sure an audience will understand. There's no point in obscuring a message with long words that send a reader to the dictionary or to the evening newspaper for relief. The tendency to be pompous and to display one's vocabulary must be resisted. Short and easy-to-understand words - those with Anglo-Saxon roots - communicate effectively with most audiences.

Winston Churchill, facing Hitler's armed forces in 1940, said to Americans: "Give us the tools, and we will do the job." He did not say, "Supply us with the necessary inputs of relevant equipment, and we will implement the program and accomplish its objectives," Churchill's vigorous language helped to lift his nation to victory in the face of defeat. Will the educator who wrote this opening sentence in a newsletter article do his job as well?

"The implementation of multifaceted approach in the language arts program will effectuate an improvement in the communicative efforts of students."

He probably means that students will learn to write and speak better because of a new way of teaching that uses a variety of techniques. But many readers will never know this, nor will they care.

Some writers use long, pompous words in the mistaken belief that such words add dignity and strength to their messages. More often, they make the writer appear stuffy and unapproachable. Even worse, they force the reader to struggle to hard to get the message. Where possible, substitute words such as "try" for "endeavor," "total" for "aggregate," "end" for "terminate," and "best" for "optimun."

USE CONCRETE TERMS

Fowler, in "The King's English," urges writers to "be direct, simple, brief, vigorous and lucid." He also tells them to prefer the concrete word to the abstract. This is good advice because readers - even educated ones - prefer terms they can picture. Abstract words and phases often confuse the reader or mislead him into believing that he understands what the writer means. They also leave the door open to interpretations the writer never anticipated.

Does the reader know exactly what is meant when educators refer to "learning aids" or "recreational equipment"? Why not communicate in terms of "films" and "parallel bars"?

Don't write, "Total pupil enrollment has exceeded the planned maximum capacity of our high school." Instead, use concrete terms the reader can visualize: "We are squeezing 1,850 pupils into a high school built to hold at most 1,600."

The advice to use concrete terms in no way implies that abstractions or generalizations should always be avoided. They are often necessary when introducing an idea or a concept. But they should be followed - where possible - with specific, concrete examples or descriptions to ensure clarity.

APPLY READABITITY FORMULAS

Readability formulas have been devised that rate writing on a scale ranging from very-easy-to-read to very-difficult-to-read. One of these - the Gunning Fog Index - reduces everything to a number that approximates the grade level at which a person must read to comprehend the material. For example, writing with a Fog Index of 10 is aimed at those who read at or above the tenth grade level.

To determine the Fog Index, take a 100 word sample of something you've written and apply these steps:

1. Find the average number of words per sentence in the sample. (If the final sentence in the sample runs beyond the 100th word, use more than 100 words to compute the average for this step.)

2. Count the number of words in the 100 word sample containing three syllables or more. (Do not count proper nouns or three-syllable verb forms ending in - ed or - es.)

3. Add the average number of words per sentence to the number of words containing three or more syllables and multiply the sum by 0.4.

For example: A 100 word passage contains an average of 20 words per sentence and 10 words of three or more syllables. The sum of these two factors is 30 (20 plus 10). Multiplying 30 by 0.4 gives a Fog Index of 12.

Gunning also equates the Fog Index to the reading complexity of various popular magazines. He points out that magazines such as Harper's and The Atlantic consistently score 12; Time and Newsweek, 11; Reader's Digest, 10; the former Saturday Evening Post, 9; Ladies' Home Journal, 8; True Confessions, 7, and comics, 6.

In applying the formula, take note of these findings:

- The average American reads at the ninth grade level. However, many read below that level.

- Most readers feel more comfortable reading at one or two levels below their maximum.

The authors have applied the index to the writing in many school publications, and find that too often the level is too high for the audience. How, for example, does an urban school district expect to communicate with parents of ghetto children when it send out a newsletter aimed at the twelfth grade or Harper's level? For a complete explanation of the Fog Index and excellent advice on how to improve your writing, "The Technique of Clear Writing" by Robert Gunning (McGraw-Hill) is recommended.

APPLY READABILITY TECHNIQUES

Readability formulas should be used to spot-check the level of writing after the writing task is done. They should not be used to restrict one's style while writing. However, knowing the principles behind the formulas -- and being conscious of them while writing will help. One of these principles requires limiting the number of words with three or more syllables. Applying the techniques suggested so far in this chapter -- no jargon, familiar words, and concrete terms -- will reduce these words automatically.

Here's another technique: Try to keep 70 per cent of your words to five letters or fewer when writing to the public. If you do, you'll be on a par with Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

Another principle centers on the length of sentences. Many newspaper editors urge reporters to strive for an average sentence length of 17 words. This does not mean that every sentence should be exactly that long. Failure to vary sentence length would destroy the rhythm necessary for effective writing and would lead to a boring style. What we are after is an average.

Holding down sentence length restricts the number of ideas contained in a sentence. A long sentence with two or more clauses forces the reader to work too hard to get the message before he can take a pause. The remedy is to give the reader the facts in bite-size chunks -- a fact or two at a time.

So, if you want your writing to be readable, prefer the simple sentence to the complex or compound one. Simple sentences contain one main idea and do not overtax readers. The percentage of simple sentences in newspapers and popular magazine articles ranges from 30 to 60 per cent.

The Associated Press, a major wire service, gives this advice concerning simple sentences to its member newspapers: "The simple sentence, in news writing, is clear, active and direct. Its subject and predicate are never widely separated. Verb tenses conform and word meanings are precise."

WATCH SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Educators and other professionals tend to qualify too much when writing. This stems from the desire to make the communication as clear as possible. However, qualifications often result in tortuous sentences that have the opposite effect -- especially when writing for laymen. The cure: Check every qualification to see if it's necessary for the audience. Omit unnecessary ones and place the required ones into separate sentences where possible.

Placing the verb early in the sentence will also help simplify sentence structure. Holding it to the end keeps the reader wondering about -- and sometimes losing -- the main point. An example:

"A final report on the results of last summer's preschool special education program, which was developed to assist both brain-damaged children and those with limited mental retardation to attain maximum mental, physical and social growth, has been prepared."

Placing the verb early clears up the mystery:

"A final report has been prepared on the results of last summer's preschool special education program, which was developed..."

For improved readability, the sentence above should be broken into two sentences.

Another suggestion to simplify sentence structure: Where possible, place the main clause first when using complex sentences. This will give the reader a frame of reference to apply when reaching the subordinate clause, which qualifies or modifies the main clause.

PERSONALIZE YOUR MESSAGE

Educators must learn to write with the human touch. Too often they send out publications and letters to the home that lack even a hint of warmth. They can never expect to make believers of parents when they refer to children in the abstract. For example:

"Reporting developmental progress of pupils is part of an on-going series of attempts to establish meaningful rapport with the home."

ADDITIONAL WRITING TIPS

Here are additional techniques to help your writing communicate:

- Avoid useless words that contribute nothing to meaning. They delay the message and fatigue the reader. Don't write: "It is our opinion that at the present time 80 per cent of our high school students are in a financial position to attend college." Instead, write: "We believe that 80 per cent of our high school students now can afford to attend college." Saving: eight words.

- Use direct quotations in publication articles and news releases. They enliven the articles and in news stories permit you to inject opinion and interpretation if they are attributed to someone. Be sure the quotes "sound" like natural speech.

- Use strong verbs and the active voice where you can. Strong verbs impart vigor to sentences, and the active voice adds to clarity and movement. Also, substitute verbs that depict motion for parts of the inactive verb "to be" (is, are, and so forth) -- especially when those verbs function as main verbs in a sentence.

- Don't overtax verbs with too many nouns and adjectives. An example: "The continuous progress concept of education with its emphasis on individualized instruction has generated wider usage of audiovisual services in our schools." That single verb simply cannot support the load. Additional verbs or verb forms must be introduced by changing some of the phrases into two sentences. Merely adding one more verb will help improve the example somewhat -- even though the sentence is still loaded with jargon and abstractions: "The continuous progress concept of education, which emphasizes individualized instruction, has generated wider usage of audiovisual services in our schools." As a rule, strive to inject one active verb for every 10 words.

WRITING THOSE "DIFFICULT" LETTERS

Keep one thing in mind when writing those difficult letters to the home: Most parents love their children and instinctively protect them against harsh criticism and punishment from outsiders. So--no matter what rule a student has broken -- construct every letter to the home with the goal of overcoming the defensive posture that parents will automatically assume.

This can be accomplished by applying a few principles of psychology to letter writing:

- Always look at things from the parents' point of view; try to think and feel as they will.

- Be sure the opening paragraph makes a favorable impression. Remember: The child broke the rule; the parent didn't. An example: "To safeguard your son Bruce's health and safety and to protect the well-being of all our boys and girls, we have certain regulations which must be observed by every student. One of these rules deals with smoking, which is not permitted either in the buildings or on the school grounds."

- Be courteous and gracious throughout; establish a spirit of co-operation. Your purpose is to rehabilitate the child, not punish the parents.

- Make your point firmly -- but pleasantly. Don't hide behind the cold formality of rules and regulations, as this letter does: "This is to inform you that your child is suspended from school for three days at the close of school today. This action has resulted from your child's violation of a Board of Education resolution adopted July 10, 1964, which prohibits smoking on the school grounds...."

FUNCTIONAL DESIGN

Research repeatedly shows that subject matter is more important than the typographic and layout treatment used to display the message. This means that attractive layout and design are powerless to trick people into reading or accepting a message that fails to interest them.

However, layout and design perform two important functions. They make the message as easy as possible to see and grasp, and they give maximum appeal and interest to the subject matter.

Keep one basic point in mind when presenting information in a publication: Design must be functional. Never use any graphic or art technique that impedes the flow of the message. Instead, design the publication to facilitate the reader's grasp of the content. Suggestions for functional design follow:

- Keep all left margins even; avoid irregular margins that hamper legibility. However, don't worry about the right margin unless two columns are used on the page. Research indicates that an irregular right margin is legible.

- Don't print over degigns in the belief that a special mood will be created. You'll simply make the text more difficult to read.

BREAK UP LONG COPY

Long blocks of body text repel the reader. They make reading the copy seem like hard work. Every effort should be made to break up long copy with devices that have been proven to increase readership.

Some suggestions:

- Put borders or boxes around some information. But don't over do it.

- Use bullets to emphasize a list of points. The dots before items on this page are bullets.

- Use short paragraphs. The rule that each paragraph must be a cohesive unit is fine for essay writing in English composition classes. But, when trying to communicate with lay readers, follow the example of newspapers and break up long paragraphs.

- Use rules or lines to highlight information. One effective technique is to extract a key sentence from the copy and set it in 14 point type with a line above and below it. Placing a number of these strategically throughout a publication can emphasize major points while breaking up long blocks of copy.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Effective layout should consider the various kinds of persons who read publications. One school of thought contends that layout should be designed for three types of readers:

- The page-flipper who spends no more than 30 seconds.

- The skimmer who devotes about three minutes.

- The in-depth reader who remains about 30 minutes and peruses almost everything.

Unfortunately, most readers fall into the first two categories. So, to be sure they get the flavor of the message, it is important to employ devices that will catch their attention and highlight major points. These devices include headlines, captions under all photographs and charts, illustrations, 14 point type key sentences, subheads, indentation of key paragraphs, boldface type for emphasis, screens, reverses, borders, boxes and bullets.

TAKING EFFECTIVE PHOTOS

There are two secrets to good pictures: People and live action. people add the human interest touch, and live action contributes realism.

Here are a few tips:

- Photograph people when they are absorbed in their work. Use a fast film that needs no flash and a lightweight camera to enable you to be as inconspicuous as possible. Shoot quickly and often - even though many of the shots won't be used. You'll produce enough good ones to justify the small added expense - and the photos will have the natural quality that makes the difference.

- Avoid taking more than two or three persons in a photo unless you want to show a crowd for effect.

- Take as many close-ups as possible; avoid photographing action from a distance. A good general rule to follow is to take one more step forward than you feel is necessary.

- Have each photo tell a single story or make a specific point. Watch for people or inanimate objects in the background that might distract from the main action.

SENDING PHOTOS TO NEWSPAPERS

Observe these suggestions when sending photos to the papers:

- Send only black-and-white, 5 by 7 inch or 8 by 10 inch photos to newspapers, except for head and shoulder photos of individuals.

- Send along a caption that identifies everyone in the photos in left-to-right fashion and explains what is happening.

- Type the caption on a half sheet of paper and attach it to the back of the photo in the following way: Leave about an inch and a half of white space at the top of the caption for glue. When glued, attach this section to the bottom of the reverse side of the photo so that the typed copy extends from the bottom of the photo in front. Then fold the caption over the front of the photo and mail with protective cardboard. Write: "Photo - Do Not Bend" on the envelope.

- Before submitting Polaroid photos, check to see if the local paper will accept them.

HOW TO PREPARE NEWSLETTERS THAT COMMUNICATE

Newsletters can serve as an effective communication medium to a number of publics if they are prepared well. The general public, in particular, should receive a school newsletter periodically. Surveys show that most citizens express a desire for more and better information about their local schools than they currently get from the mass media. And they single out school newsletters as the medium capable of giving them this news in a factual, believable manner.

When deciding what kinds of newsletters to publish, school districts should take into consideration the over-all communication program.

One suggested approach is to distribute one major newsletter of general interest to all residents. This newsletter can be supplemented by brief newssheets of special interest to parents, staff and students.

Where a minority of the population speaks a foreign language, separate editions of the newsletters and newssheets in the appropriate language -- or even separate newssheets -- are desirable. Greater reliance, however, should be placed on face-to-face communication through small meetings in schools and neighborhoods.

The major newsletter to all publics should be published regularly, at least once every other month. The supplementary newssheets also should be distributed on a regular basis.

CONTENT

The newsletter should be of general interest. Numerous items concerning the schools' operations are pertinent to all publics. One well-written story on a new curriculum should be of equal interest to community residents, staff and students. If there is special information about the curriculum for parents, teachers, or students, this can be supplied in newssheets.

What kinds of general news and features should the newsletter contain?

- News of what's being taught, why it's being taught, and how it's being taught. This includes critical evaluation of curricula and accounting for successes and failures in the instructional program. It means, for example, that a one-time story on a new program is not sufficient for any newsletter reader. The newsletter is a good place to be accountable to all, so there should be periodic articles on evaluations, additions, deletions and improvements in curricula and in teaching-learning methods.

• News of policies and plans being considered and enacted by the board of education, and of rules and regulations established by the administration. News of policies, plans, rules and regulations concerning only segments of the newsletter audience should be carried in supplementary newssheets. (For example, rules on faculty and student use of the high school parking lot do not belong in the general newsletter; they belong in newssheets distributed to faculty and students at the high school.)

• News related to meeting the costs of the school system. The public, staff and students should not hear about school system financing just before tax levy elections and bond issue referendums. Finance is not the most exciting subject to most people, but the problem of meeting today's school costs is a high-priority story. If school financing is a big story in the daily news media (and it is), then it certainly should be given regular and candid attention in the district's newsletter.

• News of upcoming events. Usually it is sufficient to list events in advance in a calendar column. Provide date, time and place of the upcoming event and one brief sentence of explanation. If an event is more significant than most, write an article about it.

• News of what's happening in education outside the borders of the school district -- in the region, state and nation. The newsletter should not assume that its readers have obtained all the information they want about outside events from daily news media and professional journals. And often the outside news can be related directly to the local school scene. For example, the newsletter carries a brief report on the decision by the California State Supreme Court regarding school financing through local property taxes. The article goes on to say what the current practices are in the home state, how the local ability to finance education compares with surrounding districts or areas of the state, and so forth.

Note: Be sure to include the address and phone number of the district somewhere in the newsletter.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

The design and layout of the newsletter must be sufficiently interesting to invite readers into the content.
Here are some helpful suggestions:

• Avoid excesses. If a second color ink, especially a bright one, is used, don't splash it too heavily throughout the newsletter. It might be used with the page one title and then sparingly inside. The second color ink is appropriate for graphs where it is desirable to make a sharp distinction between bars or lines. Don't overindulge in boxes and rules. They can give a page a "hodgepodge" look.

• Use space wisely. Type and pictures should not be crowded onto

pages. The reader can be attracted to stories and pictures if they have been set off by open space. Uncluttered space can be obtained by varying the width of columns. Many educators incorrectly believe that all pages must be filled with type to get their money's worth. This backfires when readers are discouraged by the page's formidable look.

- Vary headline size. All headlines should not look alike on the pages. Large heads should be used for major news stories and long features, and smaller heads should be used for less important and short articles. Headlines should not be overpowering (too large for the page or story), nor should they be so unobtrusive that they fail to function as invitations to the reader and as art on the page.

- Vary article length. Don't put all long articles on one page and all small ones on another page. In particularly long articles, use subheads to break up the expanse of body type.

FEEDBACK

The newsletter generally is considered to be a medium of one-way communication -- from the school district to the community, staff and students. But it need not be exclusively one way.

The newsletter should feature a brief questionnaire and business reply card that can be cut out and returned to school district officials at least two or three times a year. (The questionnaire and reply card can be an insert or part of a regular newsletter page.)

The questionnaire should not be an elaborate or detailed survey of opinion, but it should be well conceived. Plans must be made to publish results of each questionnaire and report on what the system plans to do with the results.

Occasionally the questionnaire should sound out readers about their reactions to the newsletter and their suggestions for changing it. At other times readers can be questioned on a variety of topics. The newsletter questionnaire might tie in with small group meetings going on in neighborhoods and schools.

CUTTING COSTS FURTHER

Printing costs can be cut further by preparing camera-ready paste-ups for materials to be run on a mimeograph machine. An electronic stencil of the paste-up can be made at a local business machine company for about $3. Once prepared, the stencil can be run on a mimeograph machine. Separate stencils must be made for each color if copy is to be run in several color inks. The final product looks almost as good as printing if "black" blacks and "white" whites are used for maximum contrast.

DISTRIBUTION

Newsletter distribution methods can vary from school to school. Some distribution information follows:

- Send a copy to all staff members before the newsletter is distributed to external publics.

- Send newsletters to all residents, not just to parents. Taxpayers who don't have children in public schools often resent not getting newsletters. Check with mailing services to see if their fee would be less than the cost of using your staff's time to mail them.

- Place copies in doctors' and dentists' offices. Also, put them in barber shops, beauty parlors, and other places where people might have time to read.

- Send a copy to all area mass media representatives. They might find an idea for a story in the newsletter. In fact, it's a good idea to send a news release on one of the newsletter stories to the media along with the newsletter.

- If the mailing cost is considered prohibitive and a shopping market or other oft-frequented store is located in the heart of the district, make large quanities available for people to pick up.

OTHER SCHOOL PUBLICATIONS

In addition to newsletters and newssheets, schools should provide numerous other publications to keep their various publics informed. These publications fall into three categories: internal, external and a combination of the two. Each should be designed to cover a specific area or problem and should be issued either on a scheduled basis or as need dictates.

Before putting out a publication, ask yourself what purpose it will serve and whether it is needed. Then either reject the idea or decide upon your objective and stick to it. Remember never to take your eye off the audience it is intended to reach. Everything you publish will compete for the reader's attention with numerous professional magazines and newspapers that are designed to attract and hold his interest. A poorly written, visually unattractive publication may fail to deliver your message.

Handbook for Substitutes - A booklet that informs substitue teachers of the required procedures for a successful teaching day. It should contain rules and regulations for dealing effectively with students. It should also include a school map and suggestions for coping with problems substitute teachers frequently encounter.

Student Handbook - A manual for students to acquaint them with the dress code, safety rules, general rules and regulations, proper use

of the library, class times, bus routes, sports schedules, clubs and other activities, and their rights and responsibilities. The handbook could include a school map and a list of study tips.

Parent-Teacher Conference Booklet - A publication that spells out in detail how to conduct a successful parent-teacher conference. It would be especially valuable to recent college graduates who confess to complete ignorance in this vital area. Since parents often judge a school on the action of one or a few teachers, this publication could fill a critical need.

Communications Guidebook - A booklet that informs the staff of the school's communications program and suggests how they can help. Included should be an explanation of the program and the need for effective communications.

EXTERNAL PUBLICATIONS

Rumor Control Bulletin - A one-page mimeographed sheet to be sent to preselected opinion leaders and key communicators in the community. The bulletin should control rumors by giving the facts clearly and succinctly.

Welcome Leaflet - A publication that explains registration procedures and imparts facts about the school to new residents and students.

Parent Handbook - A booklet that is sent to parents at the start of each school year, containing information about school rules and regulations, insurance coverage, the lunch program, bus schedules, health and safety suggestions, and hints on how to provide a proper atmosphere for studying at home. A 12 month school calendar might also be included.